

**Income Drops for Doctors.**—One-half the country's doctors are shown by the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care to have received net incomes of \$3800 and less during 1929.

The nongovernmental committee, of which Secretary Wilbur is chairman, reported the average net income of the 121,000 in private practice was \$5,467, with the median for all doctors, including the 21,000 in salaried positions, \$3827.

Physicians' incomes were reported as having dropped 17 per cent in 1930 and probably a larger percentage in 1931. In 1929, 15 per cent of the doctors were listed as receiving less than \$1,500 for professional activities, while 4 per cent lost money.

More efficient use of facilities and the elimination of unnecessary treatment were among the things recommended to increase net incomes, with the explanation the average netted was 61 per cent of the gross receipts.

**William August Puckner.**—For a great many years Doctor Puckner has supplied the state and a few other medical journals with abstracts from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. These abstracts dealt particularly with the work of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry, the Bureau of Investigation, and later the Council on Physical Therapy and the Committee on Foods. Included also were epitomized comments of pertinent query and minor notes or editorials from the *Journal*. This work Doctor Puckner did in addition to his tremendous burdens as secretary of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry. . . .

From the report of the American Medical Association Council on Chemistry and Pharmacy the following is taken:

William August Puckner was born February 24, 1864, at New Holstein, Wisconsin. He died in the Presbyterian Hospital, Chicago, October 1, 1932. He had been in failing health for a long time and in the hospital some ten weeks.

The creation of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry was authorized by the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association February 3, 1905; the first meeting of the newly created council was held at Pittsburgh some ten days later. Professor Puckner, one of the original members, attended that meeting and was active in formulating the principles on which the council has worked, as expressed in its official rules of procedure. One year later he became secretary, a position of grave responsibility; he filled it well and faithfully for twenty-six years and seven months. . . .

When his eyes began failing and when he realized that the condition would inevitably result in blindness, Professor Puckner courageously prepared himself to face the handicap. He investigated the practicability of Braille's system for the blind and the typewriter; both of these he used. He kept in touch with current medical and chemical literature, both English and foreign, especially German, by having matter read to him, and in the case of important articles, recorded on the dictaphone for review at home; for his determination to overcome this disability compelled him to work at night as well as day. To those who knew him at his daily work, Doctor Puckner seemed to have dedicated his life to that which seemed nearest to his heart—the success of the council and its efforts to advance scientific therapeutics. With patience in adversity, with sincerity of purpose, with conscientious devotion, he carried on. His heart was in his work: his life devoted to the cause he served.

The council, individually and collectively, wish to express their high regard and affection for Professor Puckner as a friend and co-worker and admiration for the way he carried on, for his executive ability, for his efficiency in spite of handicap, for his loyalty. In his death the council has lost a member of unique value: the medical profession, a servant who unobtrusively served it faithfully for a quarter of a century.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Subject of Following Letter: California Law Regarding Abortions.

**To the Editor:**—We are enclosing herewith a copy of a letter written in answer to a request for the law regulating reporting of abortions, and we are wondering if it would be worth while to quote in *CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE*, Chapter 417, Statutes 1929, page 739, so that all licentiates might be made aware of this statute.

Very truly yours,

C. B. PINKHAM, M. D.,  
Secretary-Treasurer.

Dear Doctor:—Your letter addressed to the State Board asking for "A pamphlet covering the state law on reporting abortions or attempted abortions" has been forwarded us for reply.

The only law we can find which might be inferred as requiring the reporting of abortions will be found in the Statutes of 1929, page 739, Chapter 417, an Act requiring the reporting of personal injuries, wherein it is made the duty of every physician and surgeon to report to the appropriate officers any person in his charge or under his care "suffering from any wound or other injury . . . inflicted upon any person in violation of any penal law of this state." Inasmuch as abortion is a penal offense, we assume that it necessarily would fall under the provision of this statute.

Very truly yours,

C. B. PINKHAM, M. D.,  
Secretary-Treasurer.

### Subject of Following Letters: Rabies—As Viewed by a Lay Newspaper Health Section Columnist and by a California Health Officer.\*

October 7, 1932.

William Brady, M. D.,  
c/o Los Angeles Times,  
100 North Broadway,  
Los Angeles, California.

Dear Doctor Brady:

I noticed some time ago in an article in your health column of the *Los Angeles Times* that you stated you did not believe there was such a thing as human rabies. I have seen four deaths from human rabies during the past ten years; and each year for a number of years we have treated from three to four hundred persons who have been bitten by mad dogs, employing the Pasteur method.

I thought you would be interested in the attached abstract of a case of a man who died of rabies recently (Alfred E. Yoder, report of September 21, 1932), and went to autopsy in the county coroner's office. I am somewhat surprised that a man who signs himself "M. D." would make such a statement to the public, which I can assure you leads to serious difficulty for health departments. It seems to me you have an excellent opportunity in your articles to teach modern public health, and thus indirectly save many human lives. It would appear to me that a man in your position ought to keep in touch with public health methods in his area and check his ideas carefully with what is actually occurring, as medical knowledge is constantly advancing.

I assure you this is not sent in a spirit of antagonism, but in an earnest endeavor to present to you facts which should be valuable. There is so much misinformation being given to the public that I feel you have a grave responsibility to the public health.

Yours very truly,

J. L. POMEROY, M. D.,  
Los Angeles County Health Officer.

\* See, also, editorial comment in this issue of *California and Western Medicine*, page 403.

The autopsy report which was enclosed is as follows:

Los Angeles County Health Department  
To: Dr. J. L. Pomeroy.  
From: George H. Roth, M. D.  
Date: September 21, 1932.  
Subject: Alfred E. Yoder—Case of Rabies.

July 25, 1932—11:45 A. M., Mr. Yoder bitten in Glendale City. 12 M., wound treated and dressed by Doctor Kaufman. 12 M., one dose Pasteur treatment.

July 26—Yoder called at Glendale Health Center. One Pasteur treatment by Dr. Kaufman. Medical Social Service arranged for Pasteur vaccine from General Hospital and referred patient to Burbank health officer.

July 27—One Pasteur treatment by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

July 28—Two Pasteur treatments by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

July 29—Two Pasteur treatments by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

July 30—Two Pasteur treatments by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

July 31—Two Pasteur treatments by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

August 1—Two Pasteur treatments by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

August 2—One Pasteur treatment by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

August 3—One Pasteur treatment by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

August 4—One Pasteur treatment by Doctor Ransome, Burbank.

Total—Sixteen doses in eleven days, following bite. Patient discontinued treatments. Five treatments due but not taken.

August 19—Onset of illness: difficulty in swallowing; vomiting.

August 21—Dr. C. T. Hallburg called.

August 22—Dr. C. H. Carpenter called. Difficulty in swallowing. Blood pressure 150/56; "Consolidation noted in lungs."

August 23—Patient died in convulsions at 10:17 A. M.

August 23 and 24—Autopsy by Dr. A. F. Wagner, Los Angeles County autopsy surgeon. Finding: Patient died as result of having been bitten by a "mad dog" and that pneumonia and other conditions found were secondary to the prime cause of death, which was rabies.

September 14—Coroner's inquest—Jury returns verdict: "Cause of death—rabies; secondary, pneumonia and other conditions."

(Signed) GEORGE H. ROTH, M. D.,  
Director, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control.

October 15, 1932.

Dear Doctor Pomeroy:

Thank you for your letter of October 7 directed to me in care of the *Los Angeles Times*. I appreciate the irritation which my published statements must give you, and so I don't mind in the least the scolding you take occasion to give me.

But I want to say, just between ourselves, that I think the abstract of the case of alleged rabies that went to autopsy is one of the least convincing I have received—and I have received many reports of cases of alleged rabies in man. In fact the abstract gives no clue to the cause of death and makes no allusion to any evidence of rabies the autopsy may have revealed.

Even if this was a genuine and unquestionable case of rabies in man, under the circumstances may I not ask, just between ourselves and not for the public, whether any harm is done by my vehement assertions that rabies can't or does not happen in man? I mean, suppose I had been the physician in that particular case. I would have advised the Pasteur treatment, and I do invariably advise it, in spite of my own doubt that rabies occurs in man. What, then, is your objection to my teaching?

Again, what difference did it make in the outcome of the illness that the man received sixteen doses of virus in the eleven days following the bite? And I might fairly ask what difference does it ever make in any case to give fourteen or twenty-eight doses of Pasteur virus. It seems to me that the scientific evidence rather indicates that the treatment itself is a cause of death or a contributing cause in too many such cases.

Certainly I do not wish to add any difficulty to the work of any health authority. No one can quote me as encouraging or creating any such obstacle to the work of the health officer. I think perhaps your annoyance is partly due to my attitude toward some of the absurdities of health departments.

Yours sincerely,  
(Signed) WILLIAM BRADY.

William Brady, M. D.,  
265 El Camino,  
Beverly Hills, California.

Dear Doctor Brady:

In reference to rabies you ask the question as to what harm your public statement that rabies does not occur in man might have on the public. May I state I have had some twenty years' experience in public health work and know whereof I speak when I say that statements of this kind from an M. D. are used by antivivisectionists and organizations of this kind before local governing bodies to show that medical opinion is divided on the question to prevent the passage of ordinances regulating rabies in dogs.

There were 2670 persons bitten by dogs in Los Angeles County territory last year, 418 of whom were given Pasteur treatment. We have had several areas of the county in quarantine from time to time because of rabies in animals, and the total cost of this work, together with impounding, runs close to \$30,000 annually. We have had six deaths from rabies during the past few years, but we have as yet been unable, because of objection from the antis, to even secure an adequate licensing ordinance to offset the cost of supervision and to get rid of stray dogs.

You state: "No one can quote me as encouraging or creating any such obstacle to the work of the health officer." I do not see how you can prevent any person from quoting your remarks that rabies does not exist among mankind, and I assure you that in all probability will be used against the Health Department.

I consider you have a wonderful opportunity to assist in the most difficult task of education of the public in the scientific facts relating to the prolongation of life and the hygiene of living. I do not know, of course, if you have ever had any administrative experience in public health, but I sincerely believe that your statements concerning rabies are against the best interests of public health and place you in this respect along with the antivivisectionists and other enemies of public health progress.

This is my sincere and honest opinion as a health officer with the hope that you possibly may realize the effects of your statement, which you are perhaps not fully cognizant.

Very truly yours,

J. L. POMEROY, M. D.,  
*Los Angeles County Health Officer.*

October 29, 1932.

Dear Doctor Pomeroy:

Thank you for the patience you show with me. I know my attitude must irk you, yet I cannot change my view unless I get convincing evidence.

You impute to me a statement that rabies does not occur in man. My invariable statement is that I don't know whether the disease occurs in man, that the evidence we have does not seem convincing to me, and that I should give the patient the benefit of the doubt in any case—that is, the Pasteur treatment to prevent development of disease if the physician in attendance deems it advisable.

If any anti-organization ventures to cite me or my statements about this I'll undertake to make a suitable refutation.

I should join any body of people who might oppose any attempt to establish a dog-licensing racket under any pretext whatever. If your campaign against rabies includes the licensing of dogs, your position is surely a weak one. Even if the county could possibly maintain an effective dog quarantine, the measure would be as effective as the shotgun quarantine against yellow fever was in the old days.

What, only 2670 persons bitten in Los Angeles County last year? You didn't hear of the tenth of them! I venture to say at least forty thousand persons were bitten. Only the more ignorant, superstitious